

and distinguished record of service to the Silicon Valley Jewish community. This Saturday, I will be joining many friends and community members to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Hillel of Silicon Valley at "Hillel Goes to Hollywood," a gala which will benefit this campus organization that fosters Jewish identity and connections at eight colleges and universities in the South Bay Area. Michele, known to many as "Mishy," was selected as this year's distinguished guest of honor for her many contributions to Hillel of Silicon Valley and the entire South Bay Area Jewish community.

Mishy Balaban has contributed to the growth of numerous Silicon Valley Jewish organizations. She served for many years as a member of the Allocations Committee, and then as campaign chair and president of the Women's Division, of the Jewish Federation of Greater San Jose. She was also a member of the Yavneh Board of Trustees, and helped to establish Yavneh's Technology Fund. Last year, in her capacity as president of the Yavneh Parent Association, she made great strides in revitalizing that organization.

Under Mishy's guidance as president of the Advisory Board of Hillel of Silicon Valley, the chapter expanded to include students at the College of San Mateo, De Anza College, Evergreen College, Foothill College, San Jose City College, Santa Clara University, and West Valley College, in addition to the pre-existing members at San Jose State University. This expansion also included a move to a new home, significantly increased professional and volunteer staffing levels, and affiliation with International Hillel, the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

The evolution of Hillel of Silicon Valley into a full-fledged institution of the Jewish community can be greatly attributed to the continuing dedication of Mishy Balaban. She has put her community before her own needs, and set the standard for volunteer leadership. Mishy is the recipient of the "Exemplar of Excellence Award" from International Hillel for her work with Hillel of Silicon Valley, which, I think everyone in the Silicon Valley Jewish community would agree, thrives today thanks in large part to the dedication, love, and energy of this impressive woman.

INTRODUCING LEGISLATION TO AMEND THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2001

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation to amend the Social Security Act to increase the maximum amount of the death benefit lump-sum from \$255 to \$1,000. The current benefit is not only grossly inadequate but unfairly distributed. It is an unjust system that deprives individuals and their families of up to a month's worth of compensation. Even when the benefit is received, it is too little to be of much significance. It appears that our Social Security system fails to adequately provide for the care of our elderly citizens, even when they die.

Under current law, social security benefits are not paid for the month in which a recipient dies. For example, if an individual were to die

on July 31, his heirs will receive no compensation for all of the expenses incurred during the month of July. If that person had died on August 1 instead, he or she would have received full coverage for the previous month. In some cases, when the Social Security Administration is not told of the death in time to stop the payment, family members of the deceased must return the check for the month. It is nothing short of disgraceful to add the psychological stress of dealing with complex financial legalities to family members who are already grieving for a loved one.

I support legislation that would entitle an individual to benefits proportionate to the number of days during the month that he or she lived. One of my distinguished colleagues has already introduced a bill to this end, H.R. 210, the Social Security Descendant's Family Relief Act of 2001. It makes much more sense that if a person lives until July 15, he should receive compensation for those 15 days.

In addition to this unreasonable benefit system, the \$255 lump-sum available to families of the deceased is woefully inadequate. The \$255 sum, which was provisioned in 1981 and was a modest sum at that time, is not even remotely close to meeting the expenses families face in the 21st century. What cost \$255 in 1981 costs over \$513 today. Surely it is not unreasonable for families to expect an inflation-adjustment for that benefit. Furthermore, the average retired worker receives \$845 in social security monthly benefits. Clearly a \$255 lump sum does not compensate for this amount. And, according to the National Funeral Directors Association, the national average cost of a funeral is \$5700. Families need more, not less, money at this time.

My bill would increase the amount of the lump sum benefit from \$255 to \$1000. That equates to a net gain of \$745, compared to a potential loss of up to \$845 under the current system should an individual die towards the end of the month and thus fall victim to pro-rating.

Mr. Speaker, surely one of our most important priorities should be to give American families the money they need and rightfully deserve. It is our duty to correct the discrepancies in a flawed process so that all Americans enjoy the benefits of a system designed to help them. I sincerely hope that my colleagues will work with me to ensure the passage of this important legislation.

TO HONOR THE PHOENIX FIRE DEPARTMENT'S URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM/ARIZONA TASK FORCE-1

HON. ED PASTOR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2001

Mr. PASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to honor a group of true American heroes who are a source of great pride for Phoenix, Arizona and our country. The group of people I am speaking about are the Phoenix Fire Department's Urban Search and Rescue Team/Arizona Task Force-1. Sixty-three members of this 200-member team, also known as Phoenix Fire AZTF-1 traveled from Phoenix to New York City on Sept. 19 to offer their assistance to their fellow firefighters in New York

and other rescuers helping in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 destruction of the World Trade Centers.

The Phoenix team, which consists of rescue and technical specialists, doctors, paramedics, canine search specialists, logistics specialists, structural engineers, hazardous materials specialists, a chaplain and task force managers, was among the group of rescuers summoned to New York City by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assist public safety officials. Although they knew a grim task was before them, they considered it to be an honor to be selected to help out in this time of national tragedy. Eagerly, they awaited to be called to duty in New York City and once they were called, they transported a cache that included 60,000 pounds of specialized equipment, making them fully self-sufficient upon arrival at the scene of the World Trade Center.

Upon arrival, the Phoenix team tirelessly and passionately used their expertise to help other firefighters and public safety officials dig through the rubble for survivors and bodies of the victims. They remained focused on the task, knowing that some of the victims would be other firefighters, police officers or public safety officials. Surrounded by human tragedy, they steadfastly worked for a week assisting where they could.

Personally, I was very moved when I visited the World Trade Center disaster site on Sept. 22 and ran into this team from my hometown. I was filled with pride to see them at work in New York, knowing that they were helping America, again, in its time of need. As you may know, AZTF-1 also was called to duty to Oklahoma City after the bombing in 1995.

Most of us don't have dangerous jobs and will probably never face the devastation seen at the World Trade Center. But everyday, firefighters risk the greatest gift of all—their lives—to save lives. They do it unhesitatingly and with a sense of duty. The incidents of Sept. 11 were very tragic, but the united effort by all firefighters and emergency service workers who came together on that horrible day will always be an example to all Americans that this country is at its strongest when we work together. I thank them for that lesson and with great pride, I ask you and my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Firefighters from Phoenix Fire Department's Urban Search and Rescue Team/Arizona Task Force-1.

STATE OF EMERGENCY AT BORDER

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 12, 2001

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, thanks to the gentleman from California, BOB FILNER, for organizing this special order series.

Living on the border is never easy.

NAFTA—commerce in the 1990s—brought lower unemployment, a larger tax base for border communities.

Like the nation, South Texas affected by national economy . . . so the economy been hurt by the dip in the national economy.

Increased inspections as a result of heightened security have resulted in longer wait times (sometimes more than four hours), that